

Dinton - Dalwood Letters

Bryanston,

31st October 1831.

My dear George,

Your last letter was dated April 1st. I sincerely hope the event you were then daily expecting terminated well, and that our dear Margaret speedily regained her health and strength. Not being certain of that fact makes us wish anxiously for the arrival of another letter.

You will be sorry to hear that accidents did not come alone with regard to Papa's sprained leg. He was just able to bear a little on it and contrive to scramble into the pony-carriage, which he drove round the wood to give directions as to the thinning of the timber, when, in turning out of the church path in the common into the church road, by a sudden jerk of the carriage, Papa, not being able to balance himself, was thrown out forward and fell, his left arm being hitched in the shaft, close to the pony's tail. He was dragged some little way, then he made a great exertion and contrived to get his arm out. This frightened the pony, and he began to kick violently, and soon threw Mama out on a bed of fern, after which exploit he ran off with the vehicle at a furious pace. Fortunately neither Papa or Mama had any bones broken, and they escaped with a few bruises. Poor Papa had a large cut, very deep, between the ankle and the knee, on the sound leg, which would not heal easily, therefore he was miserably lame at first, and for a whole month regularly applied three or four poultices daily, and they chose to call me Papa's house surgeon. The day before I left Mr. Coates dressed the wound, and Ella writes me word it is going on as well as possible. He is now able to ride fox-hunting, and enjoys it very much, but I fear he will not be able to walk to the covert in pursuit of woodcock this year. By the bye, a woodcock weighing 12 1/2 ounces was shot in Grovely on the 20th of this month.

We chose to have a freak on the 5th of October, and go to Yarnborough Castle Fair; William and Mr. Knatchbull, on the coachbox, directed the postboys, and Louisa, Ellen, Mary Anne, Ella and I were inside, laughing at the idea of our rusticity in wishing to go to the Fair; but we found a great a great many smart carriages on the course, for there were pony races amongst other diversions, which were very laughable. It was delightful to watch Tishy's two eldest boys with Charles, whom they think quite their own property, enjoying and wondering at all they saw and heard.

I came here a week ago to stay with Lady Emma, whilst Barclay accompanied his foxhounds into Somersetshire, for the next ten days. He seems to take much pleasure in his hunting, and finds he can bear the fatigue of riding and hunting much better than sitting up in the House of Commons, which place he does not intend to honour with his presence much longer, I believe.

The whole county of Dorset has been in a state of uproar lately, from a very severe contest in the election of a county member, in the room of Mr. Calcraft. Mr. Ponsonby started on the Whig principles, and no opponent appeared against him till a few days before the election, when Lord Ashley was brought forward by the Tories and a severe struggle ensued.

The poll was kept open fifteen days, and at last Lord Ashley was declared elected, having a majority of 37 votes. However, the election is to be protested against on several heads, but the principal one seems to be of admitting the alms house men to vote, on the plea of its being a freehold for their lives. Such votes were never before taken, and the Whigs are in hopes to unseat Lord Ashley; more particularly as they lose their only chance of being represented by a man of their own principles in cases remaining their leader. For unfortunately Barclay, in a letter to Lord Ashley, said he must resign the county in case he (Lord Ashley) was elected, as he should not like, or indeed be able, to represent such a set of weathercocks as the county would prove themselves to be, and he and Mr. Calcraft had been brought only last spring to support reform and all of its branches. This letter Lord Ashley thought proper to lay before the committee, and of course it was published to everyone, and Barclay severely censured for presuming to dictate to the county, as it was called. Almost all the county gentlemen were on Lord Ashley's side, and many of them who voted for Mr. Calcraft last spring turned to the other side, so that their declaration in favour of Reform is now proved to be only enmity to Mr. Banks, whom they wish to turn out. The rejection of Mr. Ponsonby caused a good deal of rioting, particularly at Blandford. The rejection of the Reform Bill by the House of Lords caused much ill will to that body, and the riots at Nottinghamshire have been very bad, as they have chosen to favour Nottingham Castle. Collwich Hall is totally destroyed; all the furniture and everything that was valuable. No one can account for this ebullition of popular fury, as Mr. Muston was not at all a political character and had never given them any cause for dislike. The fact is all the most wicked and horrible men are going about raising riots on the plea of showing the people still wish for Reform, whereas they only want plunder. I wish they would begin to reform themselves, and they would find a still more difficult task than that the Ministers had undertaken.

The riots at Bristol last Saturday, Sunday and Monday have been very bad. The three Bridewells, the Tollgate, Bishop's Palace, Custom house, Mansion House, Excise Office and the houses in Queen's Square were totally destroyed by fire, and it is said that many perished in the flames. They also set fire to a bonded warehouse filled with spirits, after drinking as much as they could, and the spirit fire ran in all directions in the street, setting fire to everything that it met in its progress. At the same time, how beautiful the blue flame must have been! I should like to have seen that.

I am quite sure that England is in a very bad way, and we shall soon be obliged to set sail for Dalwood, New South Wales. I half expect the people will get the upper hand to distribute the land more equally. Perhaps you will say 'so much the better', but I do not like that. However, as I have no prospect of possessing a single acre, you may say that it does not signify to me, and that I may as well work and earn a livelihood if the funds sink to the bottom.

The Ministers intend to bring on their Reform Bill as soon as they can, and it is now currently believed that the Lords will have the sense to pass it. But alas! Party and nothing but Party rule the Peers, the Commons, and the Press, and no one cares for poor old England. She may sink for all they care.

I begin to hope the fear of cholera will frighten the people a little. It is coming towards us now, and I suppose it will be in London by next March, so we will not go there next spring. By staying at Norrington old Sir Wadham and family escaped the plague, so we will try the same method and stay at Dinton. It will be so much pleasanter to die here than anywhere else, and I intend to plant a few trees in the churchyard to replace the Ashes the old Doctor cut down as soon as I can, that they may shade us a little, and, if we live, I may have the pleasure of showing you the tress when you come to pay us your promised visit. The newspapers of yesterday conveyed to us the intelligence of the cholera having arrived at Sunderland. It is supposed to have been brought there by some vessels from Hamburg which were allowed to perform quarantine near the bridge. No doubt the disease will soon spread in the large towns where the population are crowded together.

Do you remember the stick of an Orange tree we had when you went? Ella writes she gathered 43 unripe oranges from it last week, leaving about 20 to ripen and enlarge. I think the garden and greenhouse will have almost reached perfection by the time you come back. Some of the seeds Mr. Scott have us are plants now six feet high, but I long to see them flower. I have been very unsuccessful with your apples this year. The gardener thinks, if grafted trees were packed in dry sand, they will grow when planted. I think I will try all ways. Cobbett's English Gardener is an invaluable book, certainly the best I ever met with, a person must be a dolt not to understand it.

Barclay talks of soon answering your letter. He sent it to Lord Howick, who believes your plan of government for New South Wales impracticable.

Your affectionate sister,

CHARLOTTE WYNDHAM